

Sharks

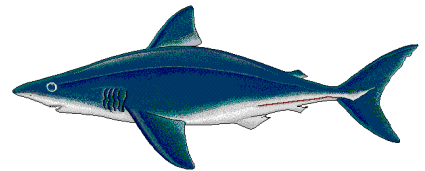
Sharks are not just found in warm waters. Contrary to popular belief, Ireland has a wealth of shark species in its waters. The group of animals that sharks belong to, the Elasmobranchs, also includes the animals known as the skates and rays. Sharks found in our waters range in size from the small lantern sharks to the basking shark and can be found from deepwater trenches to the coastal waters. There have never been any attacks on humans by sharks in Irish waters and we, as humans, often pose more of a threat to them. So the next time you hear someone giving sharks a bad name, stand up for the shark!

Porbeagle Shark

Lamna nasus Craosaire

The porbeagle is related to the great white shark and displays the typical shark body shape that everyone thinks of when they imagine a shark! It has a stout body, prominent gill slits, a tail fin set vertically, with the upper lobe somewhat larger than the lower a conical snout and sharp teeth! It can live in much colder water than the great white as it can keep its body temperature above that of the water around it. We are lucky to have such a fantastic beast in our waters!

Colour: Dark grey above white or pale cream below.
Length: 350cm
Habitat: Temperate Pelagic (near the top) Waters
Diet: Carnivore eating mainly fish and cephalopods.



Lesser Spotted Dogfish

Scylliorhinus canicula Fíogach

This fish is one of the most common shark found in Irish waters and can often be seen in aquariums as they are easy to keep in captivity. They are small but are strong sinuous little creatures. These fish are also sometimes referred to as catfish. As their name suggests their skins is covered with small dark brown spots on their upper most side.

Colour: Upper surfaces brown or sandy with darker spots. Underside unmarked.
Length: 100cm
Habitat: They live on the sea bottom in gravelly, sandy and muddy bottoms.
Diet: Invertebrates and other fishes.

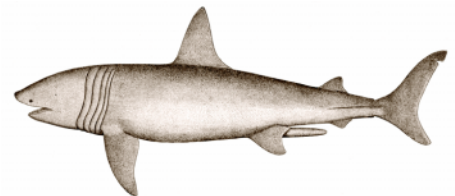


Basking Shark

Cetorhinus maximus Liomhan

Basking Sharks are fabulous creatures in many ways. Not only are they a filter feeding shark species but they are also the second largest fish in the sea - reaching a mammoth 11 metres long. We are very privileged to have these gentle giants living in our waters. As they swim near the surface in order to feed on plankton, they were easily hunted for their liver oils, skin and meat. Thankfully, today basking sharks are protected.

Colour: Brownish or greyish.
Length: Reported to reach 1500cm!
Habitat: Oceanic and pelagic.
Diet: Plankton



Blue Shark

Prionace glauca Siorc Gorm

One of the most beautiful of shark in our waters is the blue shark. It is aptly named as it has the most iridescent of blue colours on its upper body. It has a slender body and a long pointed snout. They are summer visitors to our waters from May to September, during their annual migrations. These sharks are prized as angling fish but are nearly always released back into the sea. Unfortunately blue sharks are heavily fished as they are caught by mistake in other forms of fishing.

Colour: Bright Blue above and white below.
Length: 300cm
Habitat: Open oceanic waters
Diet: Fish and Squid



Text by Emmet Jackson, Irish Elasmobranch Group

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